

# SOMEHOW I MISSED IT

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I will keep sharing further chapters as and when they are edited.

Happy Reading! ☺

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Chapter 1:

# Did I ignore my gut feeling?



I'm in my mid-thirties, medium height, slender build.

Aimlessly, I'm wandering around Carrefour, dawdling with my shopping trolley, and doing more window shopping than grocery shopping.

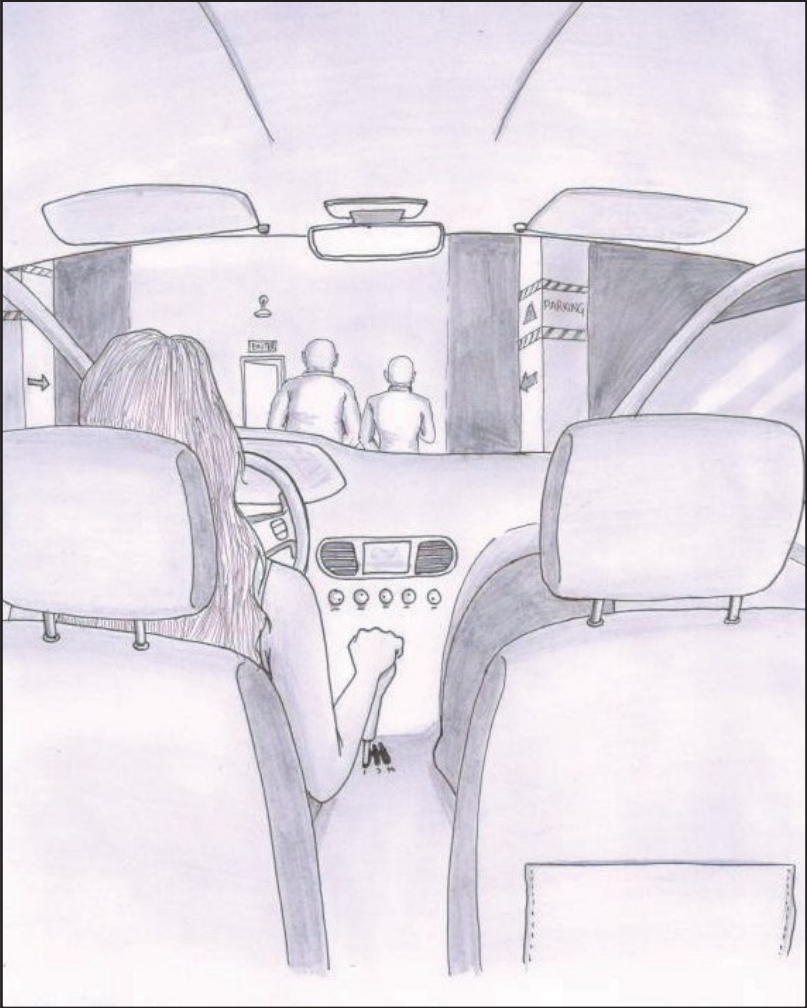
I spend half an hour in the sour cream section, checking prices of all six brands, trying to spot my brand Amul, which doesn't seem to exist here in Muscat. Eventually, I settle on a Bega cheese—I recognize the logo designed by my Australian friend Nilofer—and add it to the trolley.

I might be wasting time, but I know I need it. For the first time since the beginning of this month, I feel relaxed and sense my batteries charging. I'm happy with window shopping today.

Then my weekly trip to Carrefour is over, and I'm driving back home.

Recharged, I'm ready for routine tasks like planning the rest of my evening. *"I'll finish everything fast and sleep early. I need to get two big bags out from the boot, which I can do quickly. Then I'll just need to put the food away, which I can finish tonight. Stuff from one of the bags will go in the refrigerator, and groceries from the second bag will go in the kitchen cabinets."* I'm a thinking person since there's nothing else to occupy my brain.

I arrive home and park the car in 'my' car parking in front of the building, the one that's open to the night sky.



Still sitting in the car, I catch a flash of movement to my left. I quickly turn my head and look out the window to see that a grey BMW has quickly parked two spaces over from me.

I study the two men in the car, curious what they're doing here. I usually mind my own business, so this is unusual behavior for me. But something about the men makes me keep looking.

They descend from their BMW.

One of them has a square face and a broad frame with a fattish bald head. The second man has a comparatively smaller physique but a stout and robust body. He's hurrying along with his shining bald head. Both of them are young to be bald and must have neatly shaved their heads. They wear severe expressions on their faces.

I watch as they walk quickly inside my building without looking back. Both these men seem to be busy with something of their own, and they seem united in purpose as if they are close to each other and they've known each other a long time.

I don't recognize either of them.

Both of them are wearing the same black T-shirt zipped up to the neck, the same coco leather jackets matching their complexion. Their jackets are loose-fitting and open-front—same pairs of tight stonewashed faded blue jeans, same pairs of nice fitted black leather boots. Like police officers or army men, they wear similar uniforms, but their costumes are less formal, unlike them.

Something about the two men who have gone inside scares me, but I don't know what it is.

Not because I live alone. Living alone has never scared me.

I hear alarm bells ringing. I sense danger, and I'm scared to the core. There's no reason for me to shiver in this heat. This irrational fear is choking my breath too. I can sense some unexpected happening is gripping my body. Something about this situation has raised a red flag deep inside me.

I don't like admitting this, as I can find nothing scary in what's happening. My logical mind has tried and failed to find the logic in my fear. *"You're acting stupid,"* it assures me. *"You need to be sensible and brave."*

My heart, however, is adamant. In the unusual solemn silence created by my fear, I hear a clear whisper, **"You better run."**

**"Run... run... run..."** The word echoes loud and clear around my empty brain.

*"Whatever you do, you,"* my heart tells me, *"don't go up to your flat where you'll be alone."*

My heart is racing, and my breathing is coming fast. I can't remember ever experiencing anything like this before.



*“Don’t be silly !”* my logical mind cuts in. *“Both of them look normal. You’re reacting as though they’re running towards your car !”* But my instinct pushes the thought out of my head.

I sit locked safely inside the car, eyes wide open, casting around for anything else out of place. I’m expecting something unexpected, but the car parking is empty now.

Once again, my logical mind questions these thoughts that are beyond logic.

*See, they’re walking down the corridor like ordinary people. Why do I feel shaken?*

*Why did I stare unblinking at their backs in terror?*

*Now they’re disappearing around the corner like any other resident.*

The men are out of sight.

I feel slightly better, but I’m still not at ease.

I can’t shake the fear that the men will suddenly reappear in the corridor, come straight toward my car, and become violent, maybe physically harming me in some way. I keep peeping outside, but no one appears, and everything is still.

I’m breathing in jerks. The fear of these men has overpowered me, and I still don’t feel at all safe getting out of the car.

If they chase me, I think, I'll use the car to run away. My behavior is incomprehensible, even to myself.

Just an hour ago, I was having a normal, peaceful day. Then I saw these two ordinary-looking guys go inside my building, and within seconds my energy and strength have disappeared as if sucked away by some unknown force. In place of calm, I feel weak, helpless, scared. Any sensible person would call it illogical, ridiculous, or even funny.

I am afraid of my constant mental chatter.

But I keep waiting in the car, trying without much success to quiet my mental chatter. Slowly it's starting to die down into scary, not-so-peaceful, hollow silence.

*“Mmmmm.... I shouldn't get out of the car. I'm safer inside, and I can use it to escape if anyone chases me.”*

At the same time, I'm aware that if anyone saw me sitting in the car, they would wonder what I was doing.

I pull out my phone and act as if someone's texted me, tapping vigilantly on the empty screen.

The feeling I have is out of the blue, beyond logic, beyond my five senses, yet so powerful and completely new to me. Now that the two men have moved inside the building, I feel the danger has gone inside with them.

As I tap on the inert phone, I try to make sense of my feeling.

*“I didn’t see anything, but I felt it;*

*I didn’t hear anything, but I felt it;*

*I didn’t smell anything, but I felt it;*

*I didn’t taste anything, but I felt it;*


*I didn’t feel anything by touch, but I experienced it...”*

The more I sit there, the more sure I am that this is intuition and not anxiety or laziness. Still, I know I would have a hard time explaining my feeling logically to a psychologist.

But I’ve been waiting for thirty minutes now; how much more can I practically wait? What if those men stay inside all night?

I listen to my willpower coated with my ego. I protest against the conclusion my mind has already come to, that the men are criminals disguising themselves as residents.

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***Intuition is God’s rare gift, and ignoring it with  
will power is the biggest egoistic foolishness***

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Trying to muster the courage, I tell myself not to think so negatively. *“You’re a brave girl. Are you going to let this silly fear make you sit in the car for another half-hour because you’re scared? Think positive, move out of the car, and go inside.”*

I’m still not convinced enough to go inside.

Surprised and irritated with my state of mind, I glance at my watch. *”Oyo! Ten o’clock!”*

By a mighty effort of will, I again muster my courage and try to convince myself to get out of the car.

*“I shouldn’t be listening to this irrational fear. Tomorrow’s a workday. What I need is to go inside and relax instead of wasting time here with foolish thoughts.”*

*“Well, am I a coward?”* I mutter to myself.

*“No!!! I am not a coward.”*

***“Then there’s no reason to get scared!”*** I scream the words out loud enough to break the grip of the fear.

I can feel the time slipping away as I sit here doing nothing.

It’s time to be brave and go inside.

I turn around in my seat. Do a final check with eyes wide open. The car parking still looks empty. Pushing past the last remnants of my fear, I slowly unbuckle the seat belt.

*“Don’t think,”* I tell myself. *“Thinking will not let you go inside.”*

I slide down in my seat, face-up, eyes alert, observing through the window as my hand searches the floor for my purse. I place my clutch purse under my arm, then slip the keys out of the ignition and cautiously switch off the parking lights.

Trying not to make a sound, I gently open the door and step out of the car.

It’s then that I remember the milk and other groceries in the boot; I know they’ll spoil in the Omani heat, but there’s no way I’m getting them now.

So I lock the car and start walking, purse in hand, into the building. I can feel the wind ruffling my hair as my steps grow faster, and I try to tell myself to act more normal. But my legs seem unwilling to slow down.

By the time I reach the stairs, I’m running faster than my legs can keep up with. I’m running through the dark corridor—strangely, the street lights are out, and the building lights are off.

Then I’m standing outside the wooden door to my flat, shuffling through my purse in the dark; I can’t find the keys.

Desperate to get inside, I open the back zip of my purse and take out the spare key I keep for emergencies.

Unlock the door, step inside, and quickly pull the door closed behind me, my heart racing. I breathe in sharply and let out a long, shuddery sigh. The entire flat is dark; that much is typical for this hour, but my feelings are anything but normal. Afraid of what may already lurk in the flat, I stand stock-still as my vigilant eyes adjust to the dark.

I move to the second bedroom and close the door; then I lock it to feel safer.

Under the door, I can see the light coming from the living room; I must've switched it on automatically when I came in, but it will have to stay on.

I fall with a heavy thud onto the bed, like a dead object.

Finally feeling safer, I listen to my racing heart and look at the full bright moon for solace, to quieten me. The moon agrees to calm me down.

But soon, the street cars grow jealous of my silent conversation with the moon, and they do everything they can to disturb me with horns and flashing lights.

Restless energy is circulating freely like a mad wild bull inside me.

Just lying there, I feel restless, so I pick myself up off the bed and move to the living room, then start pacing aimlessly back and forth across the room.

After a few minutes of pacing, I rush to the balcony in the last room, gazing down at the street. I don't know what I expect to see out there, but there's nothing suspicious.

My logical mind tells me, *“Of course there isn't; everything is normal and in order. The issue, if any, is with you. You need to manage yourself and be peaceful.”* I take a deep breath, hold it, and release it slowly. I do this several times, but the effect is minimal; my heart is still pounding, and my eyes keep darting back down to the street.

*“Let me try alternate nostril breathing; maybe that'll calm my mind.”* Finally, something that helps; I begin to calm down and become relatively relaxed.

Yawning, I head back towards the middle room to sleep.

But I'm still aware of being alone, and an echo of the fear still waits in the corner of my mind.

I lie silent on the bed, close my eyes through force of will, and try letting myself sleep. But my eyes snap open in the darkness and fall on the lighted phone at my side. The phone is ringing but in silent mode.

*“Oh! That's why I haven't heard my phone go off in hours.*

*I don't remember muting it, but I must've at some point.*

*I won't pick up any call, no matter how long it rings.”*

What seems like hours later, I'm still not asleep. What's happened is too strange, and I imagine anyone in my situation would have a hard time sleeping.

So I use the powerful force of autosuggestion to regain the strength I brainwash myself, "*There is no danger in this building; I'm strong and feeling sleepy.*"



*“Autosuggestion is good, but not using it to control the mind chatter and ignoring some thing as precious as intuition or the signs or caution from the universe is foolishness.”*



The next day, I'm thinking about what I want to wear to work.

I have long, silky-fine Indian hair, trimmed well with gentle waves. I always keep them clean and shiny, and today is no exception.

I walk gracefully around the office, hair hanging below my shoulders. I love it when people turn around and see me.

The plain office shoes with extended heels make me look a little taller than I am.

Like most girls my age, I love to catch attention.



*“I’ve been wearing only trousers and shirts to the office for weeks. It’s time for something more exciting. I don’t feel able to express myself in western clothes. I want to wear some Indian colors. Today, I can spend time to decide on a decent Indian outfit for an ethnic look.”*

*“Hmmm.... . what should I wear?”*

Sets are neatly hanging in my wardrobe. I glance through them.

*“It’s Thursday, and I can wear yellow.”*

The use of colors in Indian culture is more symbolic; yellow brings happiness, peace, and mental concentration.

I hold the yellow lehariya chiffon pastel kurta in front of me in the wardrobe mirror. *“It’s not too much for office wear,”* I assure myself. *“With fawn leggings, it’ll be just right.”*

I hang silver earrings with small jhumkis at the bottom in my ears, then glance back into the mirror and am happy to see they’ll look fabulous with this outfit.

Dressed up in ethnic attire, I look like a fresh, pretty, confident Indian software girl—with a beautiful smile as always.

For makeup, I limit myself to red lipstick, smack my lips, and pick up a napkin to kiss it. I think I look perfect with a natural, even skin tone.

I lean closer to the mirror, smile slightly, and my beautiful, large teeth appear to protrude to brighten my face effortlessly. I love this smile.

I'm ready to go to the office.

With my car keys in hand and a leather handbag on my shoulder, I trot briskly to the kitchen and start looking around for my office water bottle. When I'm unable to find it, my face loses some of its cheer, and I can feel a slight headache coming on.

*"I'll manage without it. If I don't leave now, I'll be late."* I rush to the car, my heels making a noticeable tik-tok.

My neighbor Sara is waiting in her car; she turns around, waving at me, *"Hi Priya?you look lovely!"*

I smile and wave back. I know I look nice.

Work is non-stop all day long, and when I get home in the evening, I collapse on my stomach on the living room sofa. My breathing is shallow, and I feel nauseous.

I reach out and drag the dustbin near my head in case of an emergency.

*"I should have been careful,"* I think as I reflect on the day. I felt a migraine coming on this morning before breakfast, but I ignored it, thinking it would subside as the day progressed. If I'd taken it easier at work, I could've avoided it.

It didn't help that it was a bright day and I left my sunglasses at home, so the headache had got worse even before I reached the office. I owe today's migraine entirely to my carelessness.

The bedroom light is on, but I don't even have the energy to switch it off.

Lying down, I shield my eyes against the light with the pillow.

My body is wet with sweat, and it feels like the sweat is draining all the nutrients out of my body and leaving me exhausted.

Tomorrow is the weekend. I can take the rest of the day to rest, but the pain is terrible, and I'm not even sure I'll survive the night.

I give up on the idea of sleeping, figuring instead that I'll just lie down and rest as long as I can.

I wake up with the morning sun rays stubbornly making their way through the weak curtains. I don't know when I slept.

I still feel tired, but at least the migraine seems to be dying down. As I brush my teeth, I can still feel a tolerable but unwelcome headache. I know I can't rush through today. I have to take things easy; thankfully, work should be light today, so maybe I'll feel better by the end of the day.

I gulp down a small glass of fresh orange juice.

To my surprise, I feel a little hungry.

I microwave a tiny amount of oat porridge in a small bowl, which is one-fourth of my everyday diet. I eat it with curd, black salt, cut onions, and a pinch of mint powder. My tender body receives it well, and I feel my energy growing, but the headache persists.

In the kitchen cleaning the dishes, I think to myself, *“I’ll have to make sure I’m productive today, so I have to push myself to be active. I can finish off the mundane tasks I’ll have to do this weekend, like washing these dishes and cleaning the flat.”*

I’m sluggish and bloated, and my back is aching.

I can’t risk another migraine, and I again promise myself to make it an easy day at work, putting in slow and steady effort until the migraine eventually lessens and dies out.

Next, I make tea with fennel seeds and lemongrass and search for something light to munch on with it.

I open an orange airtight container and take out some foxnuts. These will be perfect, as they’re light on the stomach.

It’s a lazy weekend, early afternoon. I’m sipping tea from a Japanese bone china cup, curled up on the sofa, munching buttery home-roasted foxnuts. Externally, life can’t be better than this. Internally, I feel nauseous, windy, and bloated with slight traces of yesterday’s migraine.

*“Anyone can mistake my current state as a greener grass here. As they say, “Seeing is believing.” Suppose anyone who sees apparently with*

*pair of eyes will see it wrong. One needs to feel the invisible story of another's life with patience and maturity.”*

Suddenly, I'm starting to feel better. I guess it was the lemongrass tea and bland foxnuts. I'm not sure which helped more, and I decide it must have been the combination.

Thankfully, the migraine is almost dead, and there's nothing much I can do at home. There's no milk for tomorrow morning, as the one I got yesterday went bad lying in the car boot all night.

I decide to head to a nearby kiosk to grab another liter of milk.



Somehow I missed it